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DISSEMINATION

for EGYPT file

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Dear Madam Speaker:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to legislative proposals to withhold \$200 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Egypt unless the Secretary of State certifies that certain political and security conditions have been met. As a central pillar of our bilateral relationship with Egypt, U.S. military assistance is essential to our success in achieving our foreign policy objectives in the region, including in Sudan and in Egypt. Conditioning any portion of FMF could cause grave damage to U.S. national security interests.

Egypt has been a partner for peace in the Middle East for almost thirty years. Egypt's continued tactical and strategic cooperation is essential to sustaining success in the War on Terror, including ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. By facilitating the transit of U.S. naval vessels through the Suez Canal and permitting unfettered overflight access, Egypt has earned the trust of U.S. military commanders in-theater.

We are committed to pressing Egypt on reform. Secretary Rice has engaged and will continue to engage in direct and frank discussions with her Egyptian counterparts on our concerns about democracy in Egypt. We do not believe, however, that threatening to withhold military assistance will help realize objectives that we are already working to achieve. Foremost among these goals are strengthening democracy and governance and increasing security along the Egypt-Gaza border. A central component of our USAID program in Egypt is strengthening the rule of law through the judicial sector and has begun bearing fruit. One recent example: the Egyptian Ministry of Justice has appointed 31 senior women judges. A new Justice Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo is working closely on reform issues with the Egyptian Ministry of Justice, the independent-minded judiciary, and public prosecution, as well as with legislators. At the same time, a new Law Enforcement Advisor at the U.S. Embassy has

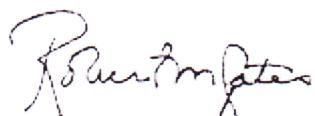
The Honorable
Nancy Pelosi,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

recently begun working with Egyptian security forces in civil rights awareness and increased professionalism in service to their citizens.

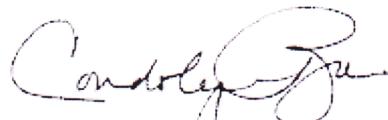
Concerning security at the Egypt-Gaza border, U.S. Security Coordinator LTG Keith Dayton and our ambassadors in Cairo and Tel Aviv are working closely with both Egypt and Israel to ensure maximum cooperation on countering cross-border smuggling. We have raised this issue repeatedly with President Mubarak and other senior Egyptian government officials, including during recent meetings with Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, Intelligence Minister Soliman, and Defense Minister Tantawi. The Government of Egypt has repeatedly hosted visits to the border area by U.S. officials and members and staff of the Congress to observe the results of Egyptian anti-smuggling efforts.

Much work remains to be done in promoting human rights, judicial reform, and border security in Egypt. Withholding funds destined for the Egyptian military will not help achieve these goals. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense



Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State